Council Highlights: May 2001

Published by the Secretariat, Council of Ontario Universities May 2001 Issue

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year.

This issue covers the months of March and April 2001.

Employment rates of university graduates up third year in a row

Preliminary results of the 2000-2001 Ontario University Graduate Survey indicate that employment rates of university graduates are up again from their already exceptionally high levels. The survey asked 1998 graduates of undergraduate programs to respond to questions regarding their employment situation, six months and two years after graduation.

Results indicate that the overall employment rate is 97.2% for 1998 graduates of undergraduate degree programs, two years after graduation. This compares to findings of previous surveys indicating rates of 96.4% for 1997 graduates and 96.7% for 1996 graduates. Similarly, the overall employment rate is 94.6% for 1998 graduates, six months after graduation. This compares to previous rates of 93.1% for 1997 graduates and 90.8% for 1996 graduates.

Nurse practitioners awarded funding for continuing education

The Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing (COUPN) was awarded $1.5 million in funding by Health Canada to develop continuing education opportunities for nurse practitioners who provide primary care in rural and remote areas in Ontario. The project, which will include an assessment to identify priorities and needs, will likely include a theoretical component offered through distance education and, where needed, a clinical component.

The project will include aboriginal consultation to ensure that the content developed is culturally appropriate and that it addresses the health concerns of aboriginal communities. This project will significantly aid in establishing and strengthening networks of nurses in rural and remote communities.

Moreover, although this project is focused on Ontario, this approach could likely be extended to nurses in other jurisdictions across Canada.

OPAS receives funding for online learning

The Office of Learning Technologies awarded $250,000 to the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) for its Workplace Online Learning Project. The OPAS project, which is also supported by industry partners, will provide full-time workers with user-friendly online learning opportunities to advance their knowledge and skills. This project parallels an OPAS initiative that provides online support services to faculty using learning technologies to enhance their teaching.

Working Group submits reports on performance funding to Minister

On March 30, 2001, COU submitted two reports by the university members of the joint Working Group on Performance Funding to Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

The Report from the University Members of the Working Group on Performance Funding

provides a thorough account of the Working Group's discussions and recommendations, including a recommendation that benchmarks be established at 10% below the system average for each indicator. A Background Report Prepared for the Working Group on Performance Funding: Lessons from Other Jurisdictions compares the current Ontario Performance Fund methodology with methodologies found in selected jurisdictions in Canada and the United States.

The Working Group also submitted a joint MTCU/COU report to the Minister in early April. For a copy of the two reports by the Working Group's university members, visit COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca).

COU representatives meet with deputy ministers to discuss secondary school curriculum

As a followup to a meeting held in spring 2000, Suzanne Herbert, Deputy Minister of Education, and Kevin Costante, Deputy Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), met with representatives of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) in February 1, 2001, to identify and discuss issues arising from changes to the secondary school curriculum and to set out means of addressing them.

COU was represented by President Ian Clark; Ken Snowdon, Vice-President of Policy and Analysis; Diane Crocker, Senior Associate Director of Admissions Policy and National Recruitment, York University, and Member of the Executive, Ontario University Council on Admissions (OUCA); Keith Alnwick, Registrar, Ryerson University, and Member of the Executive, OUCA; and Dr. Guy Hamel, Schools Liaison Officer, COU. Other government representatives in attendance were David Trick, Assistant Deputy Minister of MTCU, and Kit Rankin, Manager of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch, Ministry of Education.

Concern was expressed that university admissions policies deal fairly with all applicants during the transition period when student transcripts will show credentials from the old program or the new, or a mixture of both. The Ministry of Education has given assurance that standards will be comparable between OACs and Grade 12 university-preparation (U) courses; however, it will be necessary to monitor the pattern of grading in the new program to establish equivalencies.

To address this area of concern, members of COU and OUCA will meet with staff from the Ministry of Education's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch. COU has agreed to nominate representatives to the Curriculum Implementation Partnership, a senior-level committee with delegates from all principal groups involved in public school affairs (such as directors of education, school trustees and teachers' associations) that was created to deal with the kinds of questions raised at the meeting with the deputy ministers.

The meeting also touched on the need for universities to be sensitive to how their program prerequisites affect secondary school students in choosing courses. The guide to the program in mathematics, prepared by the Mathematics Education Council that is made up of teachers of mathematics from both universities and secondary schools, was cited as an example of the kind of well-informed interchange between the two educational communities that should be encouraged.

Other topics of discussion included involving academics in helping teachers prepare for the new courses, and a review process that would oversee the implementation of the Grade 11 and 12 courses and the consistency and reliability of grading practices and standards. The first matter is to be raised with the Curriculum Implementation Partnership and with the College of Teachers.

On the subject of quality assurance, COU representatives strongly endorsed the introduction of monitoring practices based on those of the former Teacher In-service Program (TIP). This program involved teams of subject-experts from the secondary schools and the universities who reviewed student test papers and other material from a diversity of boards, and who reported on how this material conformed with the course outline and met the assessment criteria set out by

the ministry.

COU study on impact of family incomes underway

COU has commissioned Acumen Research Group Inc. to undertake a longitudinal study of family incomes of university applicants across Ontario. Using postal codes, the study will match family tax file records and Acumen University Applicant Survey statistics with OUAC application data to determine a socio-economic profile of Ontario university applicants. This will enable researchers to assess whether the profile has changed over time. A final report of the study's findings is expected in June 2001.

U of T President to discuss university innovations at breakfast forum

On May 8, 2001, OPAS, in partnership with the Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC), will host its third Business Forum, featuring guest speaker Dr. Robert Birgeneau, President of the University of Toronto. Dr. Birgeneau, a distinguished physicist and former dean of science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), will draw on his wealth of experience to discuss the important contribution that universities make in the form of innovations and, in turn, the significant impact these innovations make on the economy. The breakfast session will be held at the National Club in Toronto.

Pre-budget consultations ongoing for representatives of COU

Representatives of COU had numerous meetings with senior government officials and ministers to present the Council's priorities for the spring 2001 Ontario Budget:

- On February 15, Dr. Mordechai Rozanski, Vice-Chair of COU and President of the University of Guelph, accompanied by COU President Ian Clark and Vice-President Ken Snowdon, presented the COU brief to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

- On March 19, accompanied by Executive Heads of most universities, Dr. Paul Davenport, Chair of COU and President of the University of Western Ontario, spoke about the key priorities of Council at a meeting of college and university presidents with Ontario Finance Minister James Flaherty.

- This meeting was followed up on March 23 with a meeting of Dr. Davenport, Dr. Rozanski, Dr. David Marshall, Chair of the Standing Committee on Relationships with Other Postsecondary Institutions and President of Nipissing University, and Dr. Clark with the Minster of Finance and Deputy Minister Bob Christie.

- On April 12, Dr. Davenport, Dr. Rozanski, Dr. Lorna Marsden, Chair of the Standing Committee on Policy and Planning and President of York University, and Dr. Clark met with Cabinet Secretary Andromache Karakatsanis and senior officials from the ministries of Finance; Training, Colleges and Universities; and Energy, Science and Technology.

It is clear from these meetings that, partly as result of the joint COU-government working groups and the Access to Excellence initiative, senior officials and ministers have a good idea of the challenges facing Ontario universities.

Equity survey of university applicants commissioned

COU's standing committees on the Status of Women, and Employment and Educational Equity have commissioned an Equity Survey to be undertaken in August 2001. The survey will provide information on the representation of members of recognized designated groups (Aboriginal

Peoples of Canada, members of visible minority groups, people with disabilities and women) in the university applicant pool. Universities will ultimately use the information for research purposes and to plan equity programs and services. The results of the survey are expected in fall 2001.

Intellectual property and copyright conference to be held at York University

On May 4, 2001, COU and OPAS will present *Intellectual Property/Copyright: The Next Decade*, a one-day session that is a followup to the Cultural Sector Symposium held in May 2000. York University President Lorna Marsden, who co-chaired the previous symposium, will also chair this conference, which will be held at York's Glendon Campus. Conference participants will include representatives from industry, universities and government.

A forum for parents and students on the double cohort

On April 23, 2001, Toronto's Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute hosted a forum, *Preparing for the Double Cohort*, for parents and students. They met to discuss how the government, universities and school boards expect to deal with the double graduating class of 2003. Among the evening's guest speakers were Diane Crocker, Senior Associate Director, Admissions Policy and National Recruitment, York University; Gail Fratkin, Guidance Consultant, Toronto District School Board; Jamie MacKay, Director, Universities Branch, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; and Ken Snowdon, Vice-President, Policy and Analysis, COU. An estimated 400 parents and students were in attendance. The majority of Ontario universities were represented at the session.

OPAS Visionary Seminar scheduled for the fall

On November 7, 2001, OPAS will present its fifth Visionary Seminar, featuring Michael Lazaridis, President and Co-CEO of Research in Motion (RIM). The University of Waterloo will be the host university for the seminar, which will be broadcast live by teleconferencing and simultaneous web cast to institutions across Ontario and Canada. This year's seminar will be sponsored by Bell Canada, a founding partner in OPAS. Students, faculty and invited business guests will participate in the event from the various university campuses across the province and country.

Latest edition of *Facts & Figures* publication now available

Facts & Figures 2000: A Compendium of Statistics on Ontario Universities provides aggregate statistical and graphical information on such topics as Ontario population, applicants/ registrants, students, faculty and staff, finances, and physical facilities as the information relates to Ontario universities. The 2000 compendium, just released in April, shows that the number of applicants, registrants and full-time enrolment has been increasing in the past two years. It is predicted that this number will continue to grow since the 18- to 24-year-old cohort is expected to increase by 22% by 2014, and participation rates are likely to continue to increase. At the same time, student-faculty ratios are increasing, and faculty are aging. Copies of the report are available on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca).

COU publishes its *Biennial Report 1998-2000*

In April, COU published its *Biennial Report 1998-2000*. The report profiles public policy challenges, including equipping Ontario universities to meeting the coming enrolment surge, and investing in quality and access to ensure that Ontario university standards meet or surpass international benchmarks. The publication also covers in detail the work of Council during the report's two-year period. Distribution of the report is currently underway. For a copy of the report, call (416) 979-2165 ext. 236 or visit COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca).